United Nations A/70/PV.86

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

86th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cardi (Italy), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

The Acting President: We will now continue to hear statements on the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the President for organizing this formal debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

It is our understanding — as has also been stated earlier in the two previous meetings (A/70/PV.84 and A/70/PV.85) — that the Plan of Action is a significant initiative that both raises awareness and calls for coordination among and action by Member States against violent extremism, which is currently the most pressing threat against the security, stability, socioeconomic achievements and social fabric of many countries around the world.

We reiterate our support for many of the ideas, elements and proposed remedies contained in the document. As the main sponsor of resolutions 70/109, "A world against violence and violent extremism", and 56/6, "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", we see much added value in the proposed Plan of Action, should it initiate an open and inclusive dialogue aimed at effectively dealing with that global threat. Such a process would signal the resolve of the international community to prevent and combat the heinous phenomenon of violent extremism. We also reiterate our firm position that violent extremism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, as we recognize the commitment of all religions to peace.

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few issues in the Plan of Action that we think require further attention and reflection on the part of Member States.

From a methodological point of view, while parts of the Plan of Action contain a deep and even academic approach, other parts merely present a reflection on certain current events and specific cases that may become irrelevant in the near future. Consistency would have brought more credibility to the text. If the Plan of Action focuses on violent extremism conducive to terrorism, one should avoid discussing unrelated issues that do not fit into the scope of the text. Each agenda needs to be considered within its own appropriate context. For instance, some of the groups mentioned in paragraph 19 are hardly relevant to the contents of the Plan of Action.

At the same time, the text is silent on a number of significant causes that have enraged millions of

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-03939 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

people but have been used by terrorists as recruiting tools. Indeed, some of them are the main root causes of violent extremism, and it is unfortunate that the Plan of Action has decided to overlook such drivers. Foreign occupation, which is per se a manifestation of violent extremism, has been used to incite violence out of desperation and hopelessness. The destabilization of legitimate Governments by mobilizing, arming and funding armed groups is another driver that can create breeding grounds and lead to the rise of violent extremism. Meanwhile, foreign and military interventions and policies of regime change have significantly fed violent extremism globally. All these factors deserve to be addressed and highlighted in the report.

It is true that the Internet and modern social media have been exploited by extremists to advance their vicious objectives. However, the Plan of Action once again fails to recognize the unconstructive and even destructive role that the mainstream media and news outlets in some countries have played in promoting sectarianism, intolerance, xenophobic attitudes and racism. Many young people, mainly from disenfranchised minority communities, are being pushed towards radicalization because of fallacious policies by some major media outlets.

In conclusion, we once again welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General while reiterating our position that for Member States to own the process and its outcome, they should have ample and adequate opportunity to express themselves on this critical subject.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago wishes to express its gratitude to the President for convening this important debate on violent extremism. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

As we approach the 10-year review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June, today's deliberations, in our view, will have to facilitate the deepening of our commitment to building an effective global framework for collective security that will be faithful to the aspirations of international peace, as envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations.

The radicalization of otherwise law-abiding, responsible individuals in peaceful communities and societies has resulted in such persons committing acts of violent extremism through a deep sense of collective frustration, deprivation and disillusionment. What we face as an international community built on the cherished values of freedom, individual choice, mutual respect and understanding, even while appreciating and indeed valuing our rich diversity, is a virtual battle for the hearts and minds of our citizens, particularly our young people, who seem particularly susceptible to external radical influences.

As a result, an integral feature of the international community's strategy in countering violent extremism must be to reduce the social, economic, political and psychological appeal of terrorism by addressing, among other things, the socioeconomic challenges and pressures attendant in vulnerable societies. In many instances they provide a fertile ground for exploitation by terrorist groups in order to breed hatred, intolerance and violence, all in the name of serving a higher and just cause.

Let us be clear that violent extremism and terrorism can exist anywhere and everywhere. Thus they should not be regarded as being limited to any particular belief system or religion. The wide geographic, ethnic and cultural spectrum of persons who have become associated with terrorist groups can confirm that radicalism has cross-cultural resonance. In that context, Trinidad and Tobago strongly supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Violent Extremism because, we believe, it would further bolster international counter-terrorism efforts by providing a pragmatic, strategic framework that addresses the negative social, economic and psychological elements that converge under conditions of poverty and other conditions of human deprivation.

The correlation between violent extremism and development should be neither overlooked nor dismissed. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) recognizes that there can be no peace without sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago commends the Secretary-General for his visionary approach centred on fighting violent extremism by promoting a culture of peace, eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and marginalization and building just and inclusive societies.

It is imperative that marginalized groups, in particular women and young people, be allowed to freely exercise their rights to education, decent work,

freedom of religion and respect for their human rights in general. Women are disproportionately affected by violent conflict, and we believe that the empowerment of women and gender equality are critical to countering violent extremism. Our advocacy at the United Nations for the empowerment of women as leaders in developing responses to armed conflict is a matter of record.

At the same time, we are also deeply concerned about the global trend revealing that a significant number of young people are falling victim to recruitment by violent extremist groups through modern communications technology. In Trinidad and Tobago we have engaged in consultations and partnerships with young people and youth-oriented stakeholders in order to develop policies and implement programmes and services aimed at advancing youth empowerment and development, so that our younger citizens feel a greater sense of belonging and self-worth in doing positive things to build stronger and more cohesive communities.

Small States such as Trinidad and Tobago have limited capacities and resources in their efforts to fight violent extremism. We therefore view the Secretary-General's Plan of Action as an important opportunity for the international community to share knowledge and information on matters related to violent extremism, as well as to deepen cooperation in order to build an effective global shield against it.

Trinidad and Tobago stands ready to use its own resources as a model for other countries implementing aspects of the Plan of Action, which calls on Member States to enhance cross-cultural understanding as a means to counter violent extremism and promote social inclusion and cohesion. Just last week, we celebrated our world-famous Carnival, which showcases the popular splendour of our cultural diversity through a vibrant array of the music, artistry, masquerade, theatre and other expressions of cultural ingenuity for which Trinidad and Tobago is world-renowned. It has been heralded as an excellent example of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between peoples of different creeds, races and belief systems in a unity of purpose and diversity.

International terrorism and violent extremism have no respect for territorial borders, or for race, age, gender and social class. As States Members of the United Nations we must continue to work assiduously in concert to rid the international community of violent extremism, acts of terrorism and other negative phenomena. For those reasons, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for his initiative in convening today's important and timely meeting.

The Republic of Korea welcomes and supports resolution 70/254, which the General Assembly adopted on Friday. That timely resolution will help us carry forward the positive, strong momentum generated by the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Its adoption by consensus by the Assembly — the United Nations body that can speak with a truly global voice — will send a powerful message that the international community is united in its cause and in its efforts to address the grave challenge of violent extremism.

The Republic of Korea would once again like to express its full support for the Plan of Action, and we appreciate the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in taking forward this important subject in the United Nations. We believe that the Plan of Action provides crucial momentum and guidelines to help Member States develop their own national plans of action based on consideration of their domestic situations.

Preventing violent extremism is one of the most pressing security challenges we face today. Yet the difficult reality is that there can be no single, one-size-fits-all solution to the problem. The motives behind radicalization vary with societies, and diverse factors are involved, ranging from extremist ideologies to socioeconomic factors and personal grievances. Preventing violent extremism will therefore require an equally diverse and multidimensional approach. In that regard, the Republic of Korea supports the comprehensive approach stressed in the Plan of Action, encompassing not only security-based counter-terrorism efforts but also various measures to address the deep underlying drivers of violent extremism. We also support an interdisciplinary, all-of-society and all-of-Government approach that involves not only Governments but also the private sector and civil society in effectively addressing violent extremism.

On a final note, I would like to emphasize the importance of youth and education in preventing

violent extremism, which is also stressed in the Plan of Action. It is well known that most of the 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters who have joined extremist groups from all over the world are young people, some of them barely 15 years old. To prevent such young people from falling prey to extremist ideologies and propaganda, it is crucial to teach them from a very young age the values of peace, human dignity, tolerance and mutual respect and understanding, as emphasized in the concept of global citizenship education. Through such education for global citizenship, we should be able to convince our younger generation that it is our free and diverse societies — not the hatred, division and violence preached by extremists — that offer the right path for humankind. The Republic of Korea will continue to make every effort to promote global citizenship as an approach for finding a fundamental solution to violent extremism as well as an overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express the Peruvian delegation's appreciation for the Secretary-General's timely and important initiative in developing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). It is particularly relevant in the current context, in which traditional counter-terrorism measures have not been sufficient to prevent its spread. Today we have an opportunity to hold a comprehensive discussion on how best to use our comparative advantages in order to effectively prevent violent extremism.

Violent extremism is a complex phenomenon, and the Plan of Action focuses in particular on violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Although we believe, as the Plan of Action states, that definition of the terms "violent extremism" and "terrorism" is the prerogative of States, the Plan of Action could help to reveal some distinctive elements of both concepts that might be confused. A clear definition would contribute to better implementation of the Plan of Action at national level.

We welcome the emphasis that the Plan places on the need to broaden our responses, act proactively and address the underlying structural and economic factors that fuel violent extremism. In sum, prevention should be a central part of our comprehensive approach, as that will help diminish the conditions that can lead people, especially young people, to join violent extremist groups. Specifically, we believe that the recommendation aimed at reducing inequalities and strengthening the social fabric is particularly relevant. It deals not only with avoiding radicalizing individuals, but also with including them in society. In that context, we must make national development policies consistent with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), including Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 16.

As Peru has suffered the scourge of terrorism, we welcome with particular interest the recommendation on developing national plans to prevent violent extremism. We have therefore begun a multisectoral process with that goal in mind, including establishing a financial intelligence unit, given the priority importance Peru attaches to combatting terrorist financing. We also believe that it is essential that this initiative be reflected at the regional level, where the contexts, capacities and challenges are similar among countries. In the fight against terrorism our region can count on, for example, the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States, which provides technical assistance and cooperation to member States.

Another aspect of the Plan that we want to highlight is the development and strengthening of communication strategies and the use of social networks by Governments. We must counter the messages of hate that could lead to the radicalization of young people, who are the main victims of recruitment by violent extremists groups.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that today Peru has deposited its instrument of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. Some of the provisions of that Treaty, as we know, are particularly important in the fight against terrorism. I reaffirm my Government's strongest condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including violent extremism, which leads to terrorism. We reiterate the need to always act in accordance with international law and with full respect for human rights when countering any group that terrorizes civilian populations as it spreads its messages of hatred, death and intolerance. Peru therefore expresses its support for resolution 70/254, submitted by the President of the General Assembly, which welcomes the Plan of Action and seeks to ensure that the Plan is properly complemented by the upcoming biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Holovka (Serbia): Serbia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European

Union (see A/70/PV.84). I would like, however, to make a number of remarks from my national perspective.

Over a number of years, terrorism has posed one of the greatest challenges to the present-day world. It has become a serious threat to security at the global level. Unfortunately, we have been witness to the emergence of new phenomena, including terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the activities of which are very different from those in the past, as well as to the increasing importance of the issue of violent extremism and radicalization, which necessitates a vigorous response. In the past several months, numerous terrorist attacks with tragic consequences have been committed in various parts of the world, so that no region is safe from being targeted any more.

Serbia takes the threat of terrorism, which the entire region of the Western Balkans is faced with, very seriously. I wish to recall the numerous challenges that the unprecedented wave of migrants has brought to Europe, including Serbia and other countries in the region. Another concern for Serbia has been the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, which in our region is a problem to be addressed through active cooperation. Serbia has taken a number of measures in that area, adopting relevant laws and taking operational actions independently and in cooperation with its partners. Serbia attaches priority importance to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and has realized wide international and regional cooperation, including with the United Nations, which plays the central role in the joint international undertaking. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is the cornerstone of those efforts.

On 15 January, the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Following subsequent work and further elaboration, the Plan will provide additional assistance and support for the efforts to combat terrorism and prevent violent extremism. My country is well aware that proactive measures aimed at preventing violent extremism are very important for eliminating the risk of terrorism, and its competent institutions and agencies are already working on the adoption of such measures. In that regard, the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism is accorded special attention in devising a national strategy and other strategic documents to counter terrorism.

It is only through perseverant, long-term work on prevention and inclusion and a commitment to tolerance and development, as well as the prevention of the emergence and spread of the ideas of violent extremism, that we can reach our ultimate goal of eliminating international terrorism. In that context, the rule of law, good governance and respect of human rights provide an appropriate environment that we should strive to promote.

During its 2015 chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Serbia initiated, in cooperation with the OSCE secretariat, a campaign called OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism. At the Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade in December, the participating States adopted the Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism and the Declaration on Reinforcing OSCE Efforts to Counter Terrorism in the Wake of Recent Terrorist Attacks.

Serbia considers the work on preventing violent extremism of paramount importance in the comprehensive fight against terrorism and welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and the continuation of the work within the United Nations on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Addressing the problem of violent extremism and its prevention takes centre stage in the efforts to fight the scourge of the present-day world. Serbia attaches great importance to active international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core. It supports the work on the Plan of Action and other activities to take place in this important field, including those at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review in June.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/PV.84). I would like to underline a few elements that are important from our national perspective.

Poland welcomes the initiative of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) presented by the Secretary-General. We are deeply convinced that this is a timely move, as the Plan of Action tackles one of the most pressing global challenges. In the course of future deliberations on the proposed Plan, we need to ensure coherence and coordination with ongoing initiatives in the field of countering violent extremism that are conducted by various organizations and entities,

as well as within the United Nations system. Synergy in that regard is required not only in order to achieve our goals, but also to use our resources efficiently.

It is important to stress — as rightly reflected in resolution 70/254, which the General Assembly adopted by consensus on Friday — that radicalism and violent extremism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. This scourge occurs in many different countries, among many different societies. Therefore, we need different instruments, adjusted to local conditions and specific demands, to counter it.

Violent extremism is a first step towards terrorism — a plague of our times — and prevention is the most efficient way to eradicate this cancer. The General Assembly's unanimous support for the Secretary-General's initiative confirms our determination to respond to one of the most serious threats the world is facing today.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): I wish to thank President Mogens Lykketoft for convening this debate, which provides us with the opportunity to share our perspectives on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Lebanon aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

In the face of violent extremism, we must all stand united. We commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to preventing violent extremism through the elaboration of a comprehensive Plan of Action. The unanimous adoption of resolution 70/254 on Friday, 12 February on such initiative is most opportune and sends a positive and strong signal from the international community. My delegation would like to stress the following.

Addressing the root causes, drivers, political grievances — whatever we want to call them — of violent extremism is crucial. Foreign occupation, marginalization, flashpoints of tension, human rights violations, double standards in the application of international law, and impunity tend to create fertile ground for violent extremism. Addressing those root causes will contribute to uprooting violent extremism.

We are also of the view that the emphasis placed on youth is fundamental, as they should be the main recipients of the Plan, particularly the youth in the Arab world, where they represent one third of the overall population. Education that disseminates values of openness and dialogue and encourages critical thinking is pivotal in building up resilience for our future generations. It is also important to continue developing modern and attractive social organizations for youth to prevent the rise of extremist ideologies.

In the same vein, women's empowerment is key, as they undeniably contribute to stable and peaceful societies. In that regard, Lebanon reiterates its strong support for all relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, as well as Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Additionally, the inclusive approach that consists of developing partnerships at all levels — from the United Nations to the private sector, civil society and grassroots organizations — is cardinal to help and assist States in their preventative efforts.

While we are aware that violent extremism is broad and must not be limited to or conflated with terrorism, it is often conducive to it. If no region or country is spared by terrorism, some regions and countries happen to be more affected than others. Unfortunately, terrorism has taken a heavy toll on my country. Lebanon, consistent with its well-known tradition, articulated in the 2014 Government policy declaration, remains at the forefront of the battle against terrorism and is committed to acting resolutely to put an end to it.

Therefore, Lebanon looks forward to discussing the Plan of Action in the context of the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which in June of this year will mark its tenth anniversary. Recommendations contained in the Plan can definitely strengthen pillars I and IV of the Strategy, dealing, respectively, with the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and respect for human rights while countering terrorism.

In conclusion, as we are still examining the substance of the Plan, my country stands ready to constructively consider its recommendations in all future relevant processes.

Ms. Pedrós Carretero (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/70/PV.84).

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which establishes a global framework to prevent violent extremism. This initiative underscores the need for our actions to always be rooted in respect for human rights and the rule of law, and it responds to the will clearly expressed by Member States to unite forces against violent extremism. The Plan of Action and initiatives at the national and regional levels should be mutually nourishing and reinforcing. All Member States should strengthen their legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism. In that context, it is essential to create national coordination bodies to maximize our efficiency in fighting violent radicalization that leads to terrorism.

In conflict prevention, the international community already has at its disposal initiatives that promote plurality and cultural and religious dialogue, such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which is based in Vienna. At the regional level too there are valuable initiatives. Among them, I can mention a couple in which Spain participates: the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Mediation in the Mediterranean Initiative, spearheaded by Spain and Morocco. Those institutions play an important role in the prevention of violent extremism that should be recognized. Their example can serve as a model for new initiatives that deepen and strengthen dialogue.

Good governance is an essential tool for the prevention of violent extremism. In developing the Plan of Action, all States should be invited to draw up laws and practices to ensure the political participation of all minorities, a key element for social cohesion. In efforts to integrate communities, the role of local bodies must be strengthened, because that is the level at which one can begin to build citizen participation. That is why the development of the Plan of Action must reaffirm the need to give communities a direct dialogue at the local level. We must also ensure full social awareness of incitement to discrimination and hate crimes by training the social actors and other relevant sectors, including the administration of justice.

For collaboration with communities, it is important that States decide to establish models for managing social diversity, including religious diversity. Once again, the local level can be an essential preventive element. It is important to establish mechanisms for mediation and coordination — mechanisms that benefit communities and enable them to connect with all of society and with the State. Furthermore, youth should be a central objective in any strategy to prevent radicalism and violent extremism. Marginalization and the lack of opportunity are among the factors leading to the rise of radical behaviour. States should promote policies designed to guarantee and improve education and promote the inclusion of young people in society and in the labour market.

Equally decisive in this context is the fundamental role of women in society and in family relationships. States should reaffirm their commitment to promote policies that ensure gender equality. During the Spanish presidency of the Security Council in October 2015, resolution 2242 (2015), which highlights the role of women in peace and security issues, was adopted. Spain leads the informal group established by this resolution to facilitate a systematic approach that makes possible greater oversight and coordination of the activities required for its implementation.

The development of the Plan of Action and the upcoming review conference for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to be held in June, should establish links with the agencies, committees and working groups dedicated specifically to women's rights, such as UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

Values education from an early age plays a crucial role in preventing violent extremism. Educational institutions should promote attitudes that lead to the rejection of extremist violence, such as training in human rights and respect for diversity. In that connection, the use of victim testimony in education could also be a valuable tool for preventing the violent radicalization of young people.

We believe that States must legislate to prevent the spread of extremist ideas and the recruitment of terrorist fighters through new communications media such as the Internet and social networks, while being careful to maintain the utmost respect for freedom of the press and of opinion. An important part of the response is to develop a compelling counter-narrative through those same networks.

The victims of terrorism are a moral reference point to be employed in the fight against violent radicalization.

The value of their testimonies on the Internet and social networks is key in our communication strategies. Such testimonies can help to develop a narrative that can enhance the human values of pluralism, coexistence and tolerance and dilute terrorist propaganda. As a firm believer in that idea, Spain brought the voice of the victims of terrorism to the Security Council for the first time, during its presidency in October, to reaffirm the importance of protecting the rights of victims and to highlight the crucial role they can play in preventing radicalization and terrorism.

Let me conclude with a word on foreign terrorist fighters, one of the greatest dangers we face in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism. If we can stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, we will have won an important battle. That is why the Madrid guiding principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, which were agreed by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee during its special meeting held in Madrid on 28 July 2015, are particularly relevant.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I thank the President for having convened today's meeting, which is being held at a most opportune time.

Benin endorses the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84), of which it is a member, and would like to make some additional comments in its national capacity.

Benin welcomes the adoption by consensus of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We commend the leadership shown by the Secretary-General in presenting this ambitious, coherent Plan of Action, based on a comprehensive approach to preventing violent extremism. The Government of Benin affirms its full support for the principal axes in the Plan of Action, which has the advantage of providing a thorough analysis and a shared vision of today's challenges and strong, operational recommendations to guide action at the national, regional and international levels.

Benin believes that violent extremism and terrorism are above all political actions, and that action to prevent and combat them must be taken in a political framework. It is clear that security measures alone, although essential, will never be sufficient to address the serious threat posed by violent extremism. Together we must continue to examine in depth the causes and factors that regrettably lead many young people to be seduced by radical ideologies and abused by criminal and terrorist groups that sow the seeds of hatred in hearts and spread poisoned speech via the Internet and social networks.

It is important to stress the need to avoid falling into the trap of prejudice and stereotypes that systematically link violent extremism and terrorism to poverty, youth or, worse, to communities or religions, as some regrettably do. Nonetheless, leaders at all levels must be aware of the thresholds of frustration and tolerance as they manage the people and situations for which they are responsible. From that perspective, it is important to consistently monitor situations that tend to push people towards the radicalization that is fertile ground for spreading the ideology of violent extremism. This is a guiding principle of national governance that African regional bodies are attempting to promote through a remarkable normative effort and the ongoing monitoring of national performances measured against a baseline of consensus standards. The African Peer Review Mechanism and multiple protocols that support the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union are two examples.

Indeed, there is no automatic establishment of causality among these phenomena, but we urgently need to step up our efforts to fight the exploitation of situations of distress and marginalization. To achieve that, it is essential to mobilize all sectors of society, including young people, women, families, civil society, educational institutions, religious leaders and traditional leaders, for the cause of public safety. No one should be left behind; we must reach out to everyone. It is also essential to ensure respect for human rights and public freedoms, as well as for the strengthening of education and the awareness of young people.

The Government of my country has not only endorsed the African Peer Review Mechanism but, because it is eager to participate more actively in the efforts of the international community in the field of conflict prevention and the sustainable resolution of conflicts spreading in Africa, it also opted to start an African initiative for education on peace and development through interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It was officially launched at the international symposium held in Cotonou on 28 May 2015. This initiative primarily aims to counter the resurgence of violent extremism in Africa by attacking the root

causes of that evil, as recommended by the Preamble to the Charter of UNESCO, with peace education as its anchor. Benin thanks the Japanese Government for its support in implementing this initiative. We must continue to support efforts by the leaders of religious faiths everywhere to work together for peace and sustainable development.

Benin particularly welcomes the link that the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism establishes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), with a clear identification of Sustainable Development Goals that will have a positive effect on the prevention of violent extremism. In that respect, aware that the prevention of violent extremism also requires the promotion of sustainable growth whose results benefit the entire society, the Government of Benin has recently taken important measures to assist the most vulnerable in the framework of its policy of leaving no Beninese behind.

Thus, at the conclusion of a Council of Ministers meeting held on 22 January, the following targeted measures were announced, consisting of budgetary allocations for the current year: 1.5 billion CFA francs to assist persons with disabilities, 50 billion CFA francs in microcredit for women, 1 billion CFA francs to combat the seasonal relocation of livestock, and 20 billion CFA francs to assist scooter-taxi drivers in switching to the agricultural sector and making tractors available to them. To reduce poverty and feelings of frustration among young people, in 2016 the Government will work to provide 130,000 jobs for youth, particularly in agriculture, education and the digital economy to foster network expansion in the country.

The Secretary-General's report underscores that measures taken at the local, national and regional levels have the greatest impact with regard to preventing violent extremism. Benin will take the appropriate measures to have a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism by not only drawing on the directives of the United Nations Plan of Action and the principles of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but also and especially by taking into consideration local specifics and regional dynamics.

Benin recalls that without stronger international cooperation, sustained technical support to Member States and adequate funding for the implementation of the new Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, it will be difficult for us to achieve our shared objectives. Benin will contribute actively to the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June and to the meeting in April on the new Plan of Action, which is being organized by the Swiss Government and the United Nations.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the framework of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), Chile once again welcomes and commends the timely initiative of the Secretary-General in the preparation and design of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) — extremism that leads to terrorist acts — which contains elements and recommendations in extremely useful priority areas for incorporation in the global, regional and national strategies to combat this phenomenon.

For my country, the Plan of Action is an appropriate and necessary guide, given the current context in which violent extremism manifests itself as a genuine threat to international peace and security and compels us to find approaches that encompass not only permanent and crucial security measures against terrorism, but also systemic preventive measures to address the causes of violent extremism. In that regard, Chile trusts that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralistic societies based on full respect for human rights and economic opportunities for all will be the most concrete alternative to violent extremism.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, we note that at the international level, particularly in the context of the United Nations, we are indebted to a convention that collects the definitions of terrorism and violent extremism that leades to it. Aware of this special momentum and convinced that these collective efforts must be coherent — without dodging core aspects — in order to effectively combat such phenomena, we reiterate our interest in starting negotiations in this forum with a view to finally having an international legal instrument that serves as a regulatory framework on this important issue. This should happen simultaneously with progress at the local and regional levels, especially in legislative and judiciary areas.

Finally, Chile reiterates that actions arising from the Secretary-General's report should be in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals that will shape our next 15 years of action and should explicitely include

new goals and targets connected to preventing violence and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Based on that commitment, we endorse resolution 70/254, proposed by Assembly President Lykketoft and unanimously adopted at the start of this debate.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union on Friday (see A/70/PV.84) and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The evolving terrorist threat requires a comprehensive approach by the international community. Clearly, the military solution is not sufficient. We also need to increase our efforts on the preventive side and extend our work beyond the Governments, engaging with local communities, civil society and the private sector to prevent the spread of violent extremist ideology. Young people are particularly important, since they are an easy target of propaganda.

At the same time, we need closer cooperation between Member States and relevant United Nations bodies. In that context, we believe the adoption of resolution 70/254 on Friday, on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism — which we fully support — represents a fundamental step towards a comprehensive, preventive response, including throughout the United Nations system.

We commend the Secretary-General for pioneering such timely work in the uncharted waters of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. While the main responsibility in this area lies with Member States, the Secretary-General's initiative confirms that the United Nations will be committed to working with us at all levels. The review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will provide much-needed analysis and indicate further steps and initiatives to be implemented.

On 29 July 2015, Italy convened an international debate in Rome on violent extremism. Its outcomes can make a useful contribution to the efforts of all relevant actors. A key element of our policies and everyday action is attention to intercultural dialogue and education, in particular of young people, as well as the empowerment of women. In our view, strengthening a culture of dialogue and tolerance and building constructive relations with all communities at the national level must go hand in hand with international cooperation among States, United Nations bodies and civil society organizations. We believe that is also the approach we should take to the humanitarian crises and migration flows caused by violence in many parts of the world, especially the Mediterranean basin.

Open-door policies and a respectful attitude to human suffering and hope are essential to the promotion of mutual trust and should be seen as the basis for peaceful societies and institutions. In that framework, Italy is promoting projects for the protection of cultural heritage in many international forums and on the ground, with the support of other stakeholders, in the firm belief that such initiatives reinforce mutual respect and help overcome intolerance and violent responses to diversity.

The United Nations family's initiatives aimed at preventing conflicts are particularly important when dealing with both extremism and the complex factors conducive to terrorism. In that regard, every element of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action should be considered carefully. We are looking forward to an inclusive and constructive implementation process.

The General Assembly can count on Italy's continued support. We are already a very active partner in joint efforts to combat terrorist activities and violent extremism, targeting crucial areas such as counter-financing and strategic communication.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I would like to begin by paying tribute to the late former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and to extend our condolences to his family, the United Nations family and the Government of Egypt.

I wish to thank President Lykketoft, for convening this important and timely debate to consider the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). A comprehensive plan of action for preventing violent extremism could provide a coherent response to the increasing threat of violent extremism all over the world. In that regard, my delegation would like to reiterate its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his outstanding efforts in the area of counter-terrorism and combating violent extremism. We naturally welcome the Assembly's adoption by consensus of resolution 70/254, on the Plan of Action, and look forward to the next steps.

Algeria would like to reiterate its strong and unequivocal condemnation of all forms of terrorism, regardless of their motivation and wherever, whenever

and by whomsoever they are committed. We also reiterate our determination to continue our fight against terrorism and violent extremism. I would like to add a few more comments on the issue.

The struggle against violent extremism and terrorism must also include the rejection of xenophobia and Islamophobia, which are emerging as the new faces of violent extremism. Algeria strongly believes that preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism requires a high level of vigilance, mobilization and multifaceted cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. Efforts aimed at preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism cannot be limited exclusively to repressive dimensions but should be deployed upstream and downstream, with a coherent political strategy based on prevention, dialogue and understanding of the attraction that terrorists exert.

My delegation stresses the need to agree on an accurate definition of terrorism. It should be in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law and should avoid any confusion between acts of terrorism and the legitimate struggles of peoples under colonial or foreign occupation to achieve their inalienable right to self-determination and to peace. We will also continue to warn against all misconceptions and the tendentious association of terrorism with a religion, civilization or geographic area.

I would like to make some comments on the recommendations in the Plan.

With regard to developing national plans of action to prevent violent extremism, I wish to affirm that preventing and combating violent extremism constitutes a priority for my country. I am pleased to be able to announce today that just last week that priority was enshrined in Algeria's Constitution through an amendment introduced for that very purpose. I am equally pleased to announce that Algeria has developed a comprehensive, multidimensional plan of action for deradicalization and the prevention of violent extremism. It was launched on the occasion of our September 2015 celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption by referendum of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. That initiative was approved by an overwhelming majority of the Algerian people in response to the call of President Bouteflika to

> "forgive without forgetting, and to look resolutely to the future and reinvent a new way of living together in an Algeria that is increasingly prosperous".

The Algerian strategy for combating violent extremism is based on two main areas. The first is ensuring that all security forces maintain a high level of mobilization and vigilance in the conduct of their mission to protect public order and the safety of the people and their property. The second is implementing a comprehensive deradicalization policy that combines political, economic, social, cultural and religious measures involving all institutions and citizens, mobilizing important national resources.

Regarding regional and international cooperation, Algeria firmly believes that, as with the fight against terrorism, preventing and combating violent extremism and our deradicalization efforts require greater attention and must benefit from sustained bilateral, regional and international cooperation. To mention just one example, in July 2015 Algeria hosted the International Conference on Countering Violent Extremism and on Deradicalization. The Conference offered an opportunity for my country to share its experience with participants, including those directly involved in the fight against extremism.

My country's efforts to combat terrorism have always been aimed at increasing regional and international cooperation, even before the the major events that the world has seen in recent years. From the beginning, Algeria has sought to strengthen efforts to counter terrorism at the African level, and as a result we have seen the emergence of many international legal and other instruments and initiatives that are now playing a very important role in enhancing the effectiveness of African efforts in that regard.

In the Sahel region, the concept of coordination and cooperation is finding its full potential right now. In view of the prevailing situation — which requires both coordination and strengthening the capacities of the countries of the region on the basis of the principle of ownership — Algeria has engaged in a concerted approach through many cooperation mechanisms. To name a few, there is, first, the Working Group of the countries of the field, co-chaired by Algeria and Canada within the Global Counterterrorism Forum; secondly, the Joint Operational General Staff Committee, and thirdly, the Fusion and Liaison Unit, designed mainly for sharing intelligence. There are many other forums that

are making a great contribution to facilitating increased security cooperation among the countries concerned.

A comprehensive approach to preventing violent extremism should be based on a comprehensive and objective assessment of the root causes of the phenomenon. We believe that the Plan of Action could be a sound basis for our consideration of the subject. My delegation stands ready to engage constructively in its consideration in all the relevant forums.

Mr. Adamov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin by expressing our condolences to the Government and the people of Egypt and to the family and loved ones of the late former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The Belarusian delegation believes a response to the problem of violent extremism is timely. Both the Secretary-General's report (A/70/674) and resolution 70/254, adopted on Friday, could serve as an important starting point and as the basis of for the intergovernmental negotiation process on the issue.

Some aspects of the report, which have a direct cause-and-effect relationship to the phenomenon of international terrorism, can and should be considered in the context of the upcoming fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and will also be taken into consideration by the relevant national bodies. At the same time, we believe that both the existing counter-terrorism mechanisms of the Secretariat and the established intergovernmental processes, particularly the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, are capable of adequately covering this subject through their core activities.

In the context of future work on this issue, however, the delegation of Belarus believes it is important to recognize a certain lack of balance in the report, which devotes a significant amount of attention to issues not directly related to violent extremism. To be sure, the rule of law, good governance and the existence of legitimate mechanisms for protecting the interests of minorities can be broadly considered to be factors that reduce the risk of practical manifestations of violent extremism. On the other hand, it must be admitted that these and many other factors cited in the report are very general in nature.

At the same time, issues such as subversion, the dismantling and delegitimization of Government institutions, interference in the internal affairs of States and hostile propaganda are directly related not only to increases in extremist sentiments but also to their escalation into concrete terrorist acts that are not touched on in the report. We hope that this balance will be restored in the course of future inter-State and intergovernmental talks on the issue. Belarus is ready to work constructively with all concerned stakeholders in order to develop and implement thoughtful, collective steps aimed at countering violent extremism.

Mr. Dotta (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Uruguay, I would like to begin by joining other Member States in offering our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the family of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who died today.

Uruguay believes that global action against terrorism is today of greatest importance — effective action to prevent it and avoid violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the values, purposes and principles of the multilateral system and firmly condemns violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms, regardless of the perpetrators.

Uruguay is determined to come up with a national strategy for combating terrorism, understanding that today no country or region is immune to its effects, as the Secretary-General stressed in the opening paragraph of his visionary and comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). In the global struggle against violent extremism and terrorism, my country has emphasized in various forums that action at the international level must go beyond the military sphere. It must be based on a comprehensive, long-term approach, involving political and socioeconomic strategies that promote social inclusion, political participation and equality. It should have at its core a strong rule of law and solid institutions that can ensure full enjoyment of human rights, an element essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In our view, that approach is reflected in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action. Uruguay commends the Plan's emphasis on the fact that the phenomenon of violent extremism does not arise in a vacuum, and that it is therefore essential to give attention to the structural causes in society that can result in individuals' attraction to groups that foment and practice extremism. In that context, Uruguay shares the view that it is crucial to pay attention to so-called push

and pull factors, and that the presentation of the Plan of Action is an important step in the broad approach to the structural causes underlying violent extremism. It also encourages the adoption of non-coercive measures for dealing with them.

Uruguay is grateful to the General Assembly for convening this discussion, in view of the impact and scope of the subject, bearing in mind the Assembly's regulatory and legislative role and its nature as the Organization's most inclusive and democratic body, respectful of the principle of the sovereign equality of States on which it is based. My country believes it is important to emphasize and defend the purview of the General Assembly in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security, without prejudice to the primary responsibility that the Charter of the United Nations confers on the Security Council in that regard. It is of the greatest importance to ensure that the collective work of the entire membership can contribute substantive elements for the development of a comprehensive strategy that will enable us to deal appropriately and effectively with violent extremism. The consensus reached on Friday morning in the adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Plan of Action, is a step in the right direction.

It should be borne in mind that many of the structural causes of violent extremism are directly linked to security issues such as the growing number of armed conflicts, relapses into violence and repression, large-scale violations of human rights and international law and international humanitarian law, recruitment of child soldiers, exploitation of persons, human trafficking and the illegal trade in natural resources, weapons and drugs. Such situations have also produced a gigantic migration crisis that demands urgent solutions for the millions of displaced persons and refugees, whose numbers continue to grow.

It is children who suffer the most, and that compromises the future of our younger generations. For Uruguay, it is therefore imperative that we reclaim and defend their rights, including the right to education, so that every child can have access to quality teaching that respects tolerance and cultural and religious diversity.

Uruguay would like to reiterate that in countering both violent extremism and terrorism, the international community's efforts must respect international law, especially the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions of the various bodies of the Organization and international human rights and humanitarian law.

Assuming that the discussions on endorsing the Plan of Action are successful, Uruguay would like to have more information, more details on its future implementation, monitoring, coordination in the United Nations system and especially its funding. That is particularly relevant given that its adoption will mean that Member States will develop their own national plans for countering violent extremism.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): At the outset, Malaysia associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We believe it can provide us with an excellent basis for our deliberations on how Member States can address the issue of preventing violent extremism. We believe that through our discussions it can be built on further. The adoption of resolution 70/254 demonstrates our willingness to deliberate further on the Plan of Action.

While there is no agreed definition of violent extremism, we firmly believe that violent extremism and terrorism must not be associated with any particular country, race, religion, culture or nationality. We are encouraged that the Plan of Action has given due recognition to that. Malaysia condemns all violent acts, methods and practices perpetrated by terrorists and believes that terrorism is a serious global concern that could threaten the stability and security of nations. We acknowledge that there is a need for us to work individually and collectively to prevent violent extremism. We are nevertheless of the view that international cooperation must not in any way undermine national authority or efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism.

We do not justify acts of terror or violent extremism and can never do so. However, when we speak of violent extremism, it is also imperative that we understand what drives it — that is, the factors that cause or contribute to the radicalization of individuals or groups. They may be political, economic or social, or there may be a multiplicity of factors, including prolonged and grievous injustices, unequal access to resources and opportunities, gross violations of human rights, foreign occupation and systematic discrimination.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), Malaysia has taken a number of measures aimed at addressing the threat of terrorism within and outside Malaysia to ensure the safety and security of its people. Those measures include enacting the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015, a key feature of which is its provisions on rehabilitation and deradicalization. The underlying basis for those provisions is the belief that the fight against terrorism cannot be won through force or punitive measures alone. We are therefore encouraged that more attention and recognition are being given to preventive measures, particularly pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which relate to tackling the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights for all and for the rule of law while countering terrorism.

Malaysia believes that we need a multifaceted approach to addressing the root causes and underlying contributory factors that support extremism and terrorism. We believe that winning people's hearts and minds, especially those of the younger generation, is just as important as the security and intelligence elements in our common endeavour to counter such threats. The impact of the soft approach should not be underestimated.

We are concerned about the increase of intolerance of Muslims and discrimination against them, which has resulted in an upsurge of Islamophobia, a phenomenon that is an affront to Muslims' human rights and dignity. In that regard, Malaysia stands ready to share its experience of marginalizing extremism, maintaining a multireligious country in which different faiths coexist and prosper and showing that Islam can not only succeed but can drive progress and development in a pluralistic society.

In an effort to counter the threat that terrorism poses through the electronic media, particularly social media, Malaysia has initiated a regional digital counter-messaging communications centre. Its objectives are twofold: first, contesting the terrorist rhetoric and agenda in the region within the digital space by exposing their misinformation and disinformation, and secondly, producing counter-narratives aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the people.

On 2 October 2015, Malaysia hosted in Kuala Lumpur a special ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the rise of radicalization and violent extremism. The meeting resolved, among other things, to call on ASEAN member States to speak up against and reject extremism and to support moderation, in line with the Langkawi Declaration on the Global Movement of Moderates adopted by ASEAN on 27 April 2015. The Langkawi Declaration aims to promote moderation and tolerance as core values for the region and its peoples in order to ensure that the region continues to be peaceful and prosperous. Only last month, Malaysia also hosted an international conference on deradicalization and countering extreme violence.

We believe that this is where our collective efforts could play an invaluable and important role in countering and preventing violent extremism. In that regard, Malaysia welcomes the cooperation and collaboration between the Global Movement of Moderates and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations with the goal of developing concrete and pragmatic programmes to further promote global peace and understanding. Malaysia joins all stakeholders and Member States to build on existing synergies in exploring new proposals and suggestions that could create and promote awareness of the value of moderation in addressing current global challenges, particularly in relation to our shared goal of eradicating violent extremism around the world.

We look forward to listening to the views of other delegations and engaging constructively with them on the Plan of Action at the upcoming Geneva conference and in the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to be held later this year.

Mr. Doucouré (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Mali commends the initiative of today's debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) proposed by the Secretary-General. We welcome the consensus that prevailed in the Assembly's adoption on Friday of resolution 70/254, and we note that the Plan of Action is an important step within the framework of the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June. The resolution's adoption is a clear demonstration of the unshakeable willingness of the Members of our Organization to work together to combat a phenomenon as complex and dangerous as violent extremism.

The Malian delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the member

States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would also like to make a few comments.

It is no secret today that the spread of terrorism and violent extremism is a major threat to international peace and security. The resurgence of indiscriminate violence throughout world, including in the Sahel region, and the complexity of attacks and their levels of planning, coordination and sophistication are abundant proof that we have no choice but to bring together our efforts and intelligence to neutralize the Hydra of terrorism and its tentacles, namely, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Ansar Eddine, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, Al-Morabitoun and so forth.

My country, Mali, was a victim of a terrorist and narco-jihadi attack in 2012, and unfortunately it continues to pay a heavy price for terrorism and violent extremism. That leads me to point out that violent extremism leading to terrorism is completely foreign to Malian society, which is known for its openness and tolerance and for practicing a peaceful and moderate form of Islam.

In Mali, the authorities have understood the scale of the challenge of preventing violent extremism. Indeed, the Government of Mali has launched, with the support of the Kingdom of Morocco, a programme to train Malian imams to strengthen their resilience so as to preserve the authentic values of Islam that have been taught at the universities of Timbuktu and practiced in the Sahel region for centuries. That beneficial initiative, which extends to other countries in the subregion, will enable the values of Islam — the values of peace and tolerance — to be disseminated.

The other approach of the Government of Mali lies in the fight against the recruitment of young people into terrorist and extremist networks. That approach emphasizes the virtues of dialogue and mutual understanding and discredits an ideology of hatred, intolerance and the rejection of difference.

In addition to those actions at the national level, there are other initiatives at the regional level involving neighbouring States and partners of Mali, such as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, whose quick implementation should also help effectively combat the causes of violent extremism. I would like to strongly stress that the Government of Mali condemns terrorism and violent extremism and remains determined to fight the causes and manifestations of those scourges.

Finally, I add my voice to that of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs when he spoke to honour the memory of all victims of terrorism and violent extremism, including the Blue Helmets in peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which, we should remember, was plunged into mourning on Friday by a terrorist attack on the contingent of the Republic of Guinea, in Kidal. That is the umpteenth attack against MINUSMA. It underscores the need to integrate the prevention of violent fundamentalism in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, as reflected in the Plan of Action, but also to equip and enable peacekeepers to defend themselves by adapting the mandate of the missions to the terrorist environment in which they are deployed.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965 and decision 56/475 of 15 August 2002, I call on the observer of the African Union.

Mr. António (African Union): Allow me first to express our sadness at the demise of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General and the first African to lead the United Nations, and to express our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Egypt, to his family and certainly to the entire United Nations family.

I wish to thank the President for convening these important plenary meetings and congratulate him and all members of the Office of the President of the General Assembly on the successful consultations he has conducted during the recent weeks to determine how best to take forward the Secretary-General's very important Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

The consensual adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, conveys a strong message of the unity of the international community in the face of terrorism and violent extremism. It is a testimony to the whole membership's commitment to a new global partnership to confront this grave threat, which undermines not only international peace and security but also the very values and principles that have long characterized our diverse and democratic societies. I cannot fail to commend the tireless efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in advancing this

issue. I wish to seize this opportunity to express our strong support for his comprehensive Plan of Action.

We believe that the Secretary-General's Plan can provide a comprehensive framework to inform our collective efforts at the national, regional and international levels. We are particularly pleased that the Plan puts a special emphasis on prevention and presents concrete recommendations to tackle the root causes of violent extremism. Indeed, effective prevention of terrorism and violent extremism requires addressing the underlying causes. By doing so, the Plan translates a growing international consensus on the critical importance of developing a comprehensive and pragmatic approach that not only covers security aspects but also addresses the structural dimensions and factors underlying radicalization and violent extremism.

Security-focused counter-terrorism intervention may seem effective in the short term. However, it has proven unsustainable and ineffective in the long term, often counterproductive and resulting in a larger pool of individuals vulnerable to radicalization. Considerable emphasis must therefore be placed on good governance, particularly the promotion of accountable, transparent and inclusive governance systems based on the rule of law, as well as on addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality. In addition, efforts should also be focused on social and community cohesion, education and a culture of dialogue.

In Africa, terrorism and violent extremism still represent the most serious threat to peace and security. Despite the sustained efforts deployed and the progress made in preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism, the phenomenon continues to expand geographically and brazenly displays unprecedented levels of violence in various parts of the continent. The African Union (AU) remains actively engaged in the fight against this scourge. The relevant AU policy organs have articulated a comprehensive framework for the implementation of the AU and international counter-terrorism instruments in Africa. The AU has also undertaken numerous capacity-building initiatives to enhance the capacity of its member States to combat terrorism.

The commitment of the African Union to combating terrorism and violent extremism was further demonstrated during the Summit of the African Union Peace and Security Council, held on 29 January, which, among other things, discussed and reviewed AU efforts against terrorism. The Summit reaffirmed the continued relevance of the instruments adopted by the Organization of African Unity/African Union over the years and called for renewed efforts to combat extremism and radical religious interpretations that foster intolerance and violence.

The Summit also agreed to pursue and intensify efforts to support the establishment of regional cooperation mechanisms to address specific transnational threats in different regions of the continent. In that regard, it is worth recalling that a number of security cooperation mechanisms have already been established to encourage better coordination and exchange of information among member States, notably within the frameworks of the Nouakchott Process, the Sahel Fusion and Liaison Unit, the Djibouti Process for Eastern Africa and the Eastern Africa Fusion and Liaison Unit.

Furthermore, mindful of the fact that countering terrorism without addressing the drivers of violent extremism is likely to be counterproductive, the AU Commission continues to work closely with members States towards developing sound national policies and programmes to counter radicalization, delegitimize the terrorist's narratives vis-à-vis the youth, build young people's resilience against violent extremism and renew their confidence in their Governments' ability to respond to their needs.

It is in that context that a number of measures have been initiated by the AU Commission. Those include developing and implementing programmes to counter radicalization and violent extremism in prisons and detention facilities; facilitating open discussions between State authorities and civil society, including religious authorities and women's organizations, in order to allow communities to air their grievances and contribute actively to efforts to counter extremist ideologies; engaging the media in countering terrorist narratives and delegitimizing violent ideologies; providing a platform for victims of terrorist acts to contribute to the overall efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism; and encouraging member States to ensure the successful implementation of their economic development and poverty alleviation policies and programmes.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the African Union's commitment to fully shouldering its share of responsibility in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. We should also be mindful of the fact that

conditions that provide fertile ground for terrorism and violent extremism have to be addressed globally.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on these items. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 16 and 117.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.